## KEY FINDINGS

***All audiences praise the benefits of education***

- Education gives children brighter future and self-development (both physical and mental)
- Education bears strong religious values as being educated is a duty for every Muslim, male and female
- School attendance has a strong social value because educated children have the opportunity to do something for their country
- Education has a long-term economic value because educated children will have access to better paid jobs

***Women are aware of their restricted role within the Afghan society***

- The role of a woman is very much restricted to her household, family and children
- Women are aware of social pressure and their lack of autonomy
- Mothers do not describe themselves as being able to generate changes they desire

***Men are the key decision-makers inside the family***

- Women can't do anything but obey their husband
- Women responsibilities are mostly linked with housekeeping tasks especially for those who do not send their girls to school

***Main barriers to girls' education are social and economic***

- Social pressure and tradition, even when not accepted, are not challenged by girls nor by mothers
- School system implies leaving the homes hence transgressing conservative social habits
- Girls' schools are not always accessible, especially in remote areas and transportation is perceived as a potential danger
- School is unaffordable to the poorest households
- Women and girls are aware that they are an additional labor force to the household (farm, etc...)
- Many reluctant parents to girls' attendance to school are illiterate

- Some women and daughters are secluded in their home and do not access mass media
- Audience listen to different media depending on their location

***Main influencers in the Afghan society are religion and community***

- Religion is prominent in Afghan society
    - it becomes a barrier when it is an excuse to enforce conservative traditions
    - it is an opportunity because girls' education is a duty in Islam
- Community dictates decisions within the family circle
- Teachers do not gain unanimous suffrage among all the audiences

***Opportunities for changes***

- Benefits of girls' attendance to school is clearly identified by all audiences
- Islam is perceived as being in favor of girls' education and mullahs do not reject the formal education system
- Patriotism could reconcile tradition, religion and modernity
- Emergence of new models for women and girls
- Afghans wait for their politicians to implement changes
- Radio is a useful media almost accessible to all

# 10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AROUND GIRLS' EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN 2004

1. All stakeholders in the education area should be involved in the process.
2. The communication campaign should focus on reassuring reluctant parents and NOT on communicating only around the benefits of girls' education.
3. Involve mullahs and community leaders to reassure reluctant parents about girls' school attendance.
4. Patriotism could be used to federate people around girls' education.
5. Use models and inspiring characters as much as possible.
6. Communication should not be articulated around teachers.
7. Adapt to regional specificities.
8. Adapt communication to the lowest level of understanding.
9. Use radio as mass coverage media but do not neglect others means of communication.
10. Find ways to reach secluded girls and mothers.

## DETAILED RESULTS - YOUNG GIRLS

### *Dreams / aspirations*

"Serving the country" comes many time as one of the main personal goal for the future like "having a good job", especially within the educated girls audience. This is probably the result of the educated girls being more open to the world (as opposed to the non-educated whose world is limited to the house). It also reflects a strong sense of patriotism in a country that is getting rebuilt. It therefore does not come as a surprise that the concepts of having fun/leisure activities, even in the future, are absent in almost all the interviews.

Some of the interviewees even mention prominent Afghan women who have succeeded in their professional lives and are now working for government or public service (ex: Seema Samar, Suela Siddiqi).

As expected, being a teacher (teachers are the first adults that the young girls going to school are meeting outside of the family circle) is the most favored job for girls especially for the very young ones.

Mothers are not models for girls, excepted when they work or for purely affective reasons. A mother who stays at home is seen as *"ignorant"*. A 15 yo girl from Kandahar said *"for my mother's life is not enjoyable…"*

### *Changes*

Almost all girls are asking for changes in their lives.

These changes are most wanted in two different areas, education/future professional life and family. The second statement could be interpreted as a wish to "escape" from the pressure of the family circle or even home seclusion.

A majority of interviewees don't think that they will cause the changes but rather think that changes will come from external factors.

One of the main barriers to change is submission to parents, some of them finding hard to convince them when conflicts occur.

On the other side, some young girls are very militant, ex. 15 yo from Bamyan: *"when a person decides to do something then (s)he manages to succeed!"*; 8 yo girl from Parwan who only attend religious primary school *"I want to go to school, if my parents don't let me go, I will go by myself, I want to become a teacher"*.

### *Perception of mothers*

Proximity with the mother is strong, but the mother is not perceived as someone who plays a major role within the family. The decision-maker is the father.

There is a mix between mothers who want their daughters to stay within the family circle and those for whom education is a priority.

In terms of professional ambitions mothers' have for the daughters (based on their daughters perception), answers are split the same way with two kind of mothers, those who would be proud of their daughters because of professional achievements and those proud of their daughters because of "housekeeping nicely done, etc...".

The perception of the mother's role is very much restricted to housekeeping work for a large majority, hence similarities perceived in terms of mindset in the interviews but not in terms of professional ambitions.

Several times statement like *"my mother prefers the boys"* have been made. This highlights problems girls are facing home in terms of recognition, gender issues and tradition in a patriarchal society.

***Boys / Fathers***

Independence is the main consequence of gender differentiation. Ex. 14 yo girl from Khost: *"the main difference between boys and girls is that boys can solve their problems independently... and we cannot"* 14 yo from Kabul *"Boys are independent but girls are not"*.

*"Wedding", "tradition"* and *"good religious practices"* come out very often as means for the girls to impress their fathers, two of these three items are not connected at all with education, which in not in favor of school attendance.

*"Fanatical fathers, illiterate and cruel"* are often quoted. These adjectives sometimes also apply to other men of the families.

Many fathers are said to decide about everything.

Problems do not occur that often according to the girls, when they occur it is often because of the father and the mother is the one who can understand them and try to solve it.

***Fears***

A lot of answers are related to mysticism and rural life especially in the south and the most remote areas, like fear of Djinns and wild animals. This comes in addition to the fear of war and destructions. These fears illustrate the fact that girls are not very open to the world as they fear an element that is very close to them.

Girls do not seem to suffer too much from insecurity while attending schools even if some of them are well aware of attacks against girls' schools (mentioned several times, sometimes very precisely)

***Girls and school***

Most of the interviewees see education as a mean to achieve their goals.

Most of the interviewees didn't attend school during Taliban time and now enjoy going to school.

The benefits of school are clearly identified. School makes them become "literate, clever, independent and open to the world". They feel that going to school is changing their life, that they will have a better situation, understand more things and become more proud of themselves because they are able to read.

There is a big difference between girls who go to school and those who do not. Girls who go to school are perceived as more intelligent, more capable to solve their own problems in life.

Girls who don't go, cannot read, and don't understand what is happening in their own lives (many negative insulting statement). The consequences are not only mental but also physical, a young girl from Kabul says: *"girls who do not attend school are dirty and sick".*

Strong negative statements about teachers are rare, only compliments or balanced opinion are quoted.

Girls feel at ease at schools, having good relationships with other students and security not being a big issue for them.

All the interviewees who do not go to school want to do so. They mostly don't go because of family restrictions, social pressure and less frequently because there is no school close their home.

They claim that they would have a better life if they could attend school but their parents need to be convinced.

Like the mothers, fathers are supposed to be in favor of school education excepted for those seen as "fanatical or cruel".

Sometimes mothers appear to be a barrier: girls are often mentioning the fact that their mothers are asking them to help in the house. A 14 yo girl from Khost quotes *"My father wants me to work but my mother wants me to stay at home"*, it is striking especially in the most conservative parts. The problem also comes from the mothers who have been used to stay home and not to work.

Again when we refer to what would please the mother of the father: 13 yo from Kabul *"to be nice to my father I have to study well, to be nice to my mother I have to do the housekeeping work properly".*

***Media***

Very few interviewees did not mention any media at all.

Many girls, even those secluded in the houses, said they have access to radio.

Radio and TV are the preferred media, the strongest barriers to access TV being the lack of money in the family, coverage and power cuts.

# DETAILED RESULTS - YOUNG BOYS

### *Vision of the future / Changes*

For young boys, the future is very much linked with professional achievement *"to get a good job, to become someone".* Many quote as models famous Afghans, ministers and local governors also.

Boys seem optimistic about the possibility to make their dreams come true and feel in control of their lives. This was especially noticeable in geographical areas where security and economic situations have improved after fall of Taliban (ex: Herat-safe/prosperous).

Few boys are fighting for changes within their families or for any other social changes.

### *Education*

Interviewees who do not attend school mention the bad finance of their families *" we have to work to bring money home",* 15 yo from Bamyan: *"If I had money I would go to school and become literate".*

Boys' education is perceived as a priority for both parents, *"in order to get a good job and social respect".*

Boys help parents in the house/farm but seem to manage the conflict between helping in the house/farm and going to school by attending school in the morning and helping parents in the afternoon.

School is very positively perceived:
All the boys enjoy going to school (very few negative quotes), school make them become *"literate clever, independent and open to the world".*
In general they quote that education and attendance to school will help them achieve their high ambitions.

Opinions about teachers are positive with areas of improvement like "technical skills".

The reaction from parents' relatives and neighbors regarding school and education in general, is positive.

Boys who do not go to school would like to go, they are ashamed about the fact that they do not attend scholarship, and are not very talkative about it. They are all aware of the benefits of attendance to school.

### *Boys and girls / girls at school*

A major difference between boys and girls is that boys are the only ones mentioning leisure activities in their life in general, ex. 12 yo from Herat: *"In the future, I want to play football",* they are the only ones who can have entertainment whereas activities

of their sisters are more focused on *"serving, taking care of the other member of the family, doing housekeeping tasks".*

Boys quote having good relationship with their sisters, helping them and being protective with them.

Boys mention very often that they have to get good marks at school so that their parents become proud of them and see the fact of "sending children" to school as a duty. "Sending girls (to school)" is also a duty for a large majority of boys, despite some of them quoting that it is not so much a good idea, and this, not only in rural areas, ex. boy 13 yo from Kabul city *"school is not that important for girls".*

The difference between girls who go to school and those who do not is significant: girls who do not are *"not polite, they are evil"*

Sisters' non-attendance to school is a bit of a taboo subject, almost all the boys having negative opinions about girls not attending schools. Boys find it hard to comment their parents' decisions when parents decide not to allow their sisters to go to school.

For young boys, transportation and the fact that girls could be seen alone or be "on the street" (which is seen as a bad thing) are barriers to girls' attendance to school. Many interviewees have their homes far from schools especially in rural areas, which raises the issue of the number of schools for girls as well and/or the issue of school bus to facilitate transportation.

Religion is often mentioned but never really as a barrier to girls' education: "girls can go to school but in the respect of Islam".

***Role of the father and the mother***

The father is the one who brings money and social status to the family, whereas the mother's activities are focused on housekeeping activities.

Their roles are very much distinct in traditional families where mothers decide about basic things linked with the house, and father deciding on major things. This is particularly true in villages.

Cruelty of the father (a predominant quote in girls' interviews) is quoted as well as fanatism, ex 15 yo boy from Kabul *"my father is cruel and does not want to dialog with my mother". Cruelty is often associated with illiteracy of the parents.*

***Media***

Boys are an easy target for media (many quotes); even new media like internet are mentioned.

TV and radio are their favorite media; notions of entertainment/reliability for media are ambiguous for them as media are not sophisticated in the country.

## DETAILED RESULTS - MOTHERS

### *Opinion about their own scholarship*

The majority of interviewees did not go to school but those who attended school have very positive opinions about school.

Those who did not, recognize that they would have had a better situation if they had attended school.

Family interdiction is identified as the main factor for their non-attendance.

### *Decisions at home...*

For a majority of the interviewees, responsibilities for women at home are limited to children and housekeeping work. Some of them almost don't decide about anything. As a mother from Bamyan puts it *"I deal with the small things and my husband deals with whatever is important".* Men decide about social life, especially if the wife does not work.

The better educated still quote that they have less responsibility than their husbands.

Daughters help a lot at home for a majority of mothers, again with a main focus on housekeeping.

### *Dreams / aspirations*

Interviewees feel that they are representative of Afghan women, and dream of a better future.

Many mothers expressed revolts during the interviews, ex. 43 yo mother from Kandahar *"In our community, women are nothing, they don't control anything".*

Women are craving for change. Main obstacles to change are described as *"tradition"* and *"economic factors"* and less predominantly as *"husband or the other men of the family"* or *"religion".*

Again some women quote that religion is not a bad thing, but the misuse of religion has led to oppression of women.

Interviewees still think that those changes can happen but they think that it will come from external factors or opinion leaders, ex. 35 yo mother from Khost: *"The leaders of our tribes should sensitize the local people about the benefits of education".*




# GIRLS' EDUCATION

# FORMATIVE RESEARCH

**Altai Consulting – 22nd December 2003**

### ***Girls and school***

*Benefits*

Benefits from school are identified by the interviewees: *"empowerment and self-accomplishment"* and *"learning professional skills, getting a job"* are the most quoted.

*"Independence and autonomy"* are values that are often quoted by mothers.

Those whose daughters don't go to school would prefer them to go to school quoting the same benefits.

Mothers are well aware of their daughters feeling happy at school.

Mothers put a lot of hope in the future of their daughter focusing on social status rather than elements linked with the traditional role of women (ex: *"wedding"* or *"taking care of children"*) and think that education can help their daughters achieve their goals. The focus on social status also means *"staying home"* for the most conservative and illiterate ones which has a different impact on girls' attendance to school.

*Barriers*

The interviewees quote traditional ethnical behavior as the main barrier to girls' education, ex. 30 yo mother from Kabul *"we are Hazara people, we are dark-minded, we don't send our girls to school"*.

Other barriers often quoted are *"school facilities", "financial problems"*.

School registration is known even by illiterate mother and is not a barrier.

Another barrier to school attendance that is much more present within the mothers is that schools are far away. There is a lot of speculation about what is happening on the way to school *"We all know that bad things happen on the way to school... and Afghanistan is not secure"*.
Mothers are the only target group mentioning security issues on the way to school.

Women are well aware that in order to convince neighbors to send their girls to school both mother and father have to be contacted, they would use arguments linked with professional life to promote girls' education.

### ***Media***

Women mention Radio and TV as media that they have an access to but it is not the only media that they trust, ex women from Bamyan *"I think radio and mullahs tell the truth"*.

Radio is important for women all the more so as many of them are not used to leave their homes very regularly.

# DETAILED RESULTS - FATHERS

## *Opinion about their own scholarship*

Most of the interviewees are happy to have attended school.

In general they acknowledge that school system is improving in Afghanistan but the eldest ones are claiming that school is still not as good at is used to be in the past (reference to pre-war time).

Those who did not attend school quoted bad financial situation of their families and lack of time (work on the land of their family, help the father at work, etc...).

*"Being smarter, having a better social position and making more money"* are clearly identified as general benefits to school attendance.

## *Children education and schools*

Children are not perceived as facing specific problems at school in general, and fathers are proud of their attendance to schools. In general they are very happy for them.

A strong majority of fathers quote education as a basic right.

Values at school are in accordance with family values for most of the fathers.

The main benefits for children attending school are professional learning's, serving the country, and getting self-accomplished.

Opinions on the teachers were very balanced with only a slight majority of positive opinions and many negative quotes *"some of them are not professional; arrive late in the morning, etc..."*

Very few fathers did not have information about how to register a child at school. The process of registration is not a barrier to any school attendance.

## *Focusing on girls' education*

Almost all interviewees think it is positive to send girls to school. They clearly see the difference between girls who go to school and those who do not, sometimes quoting very strongly *"it is like the difference between someone who can see and a blind person",* 32 yo father from Bamyan.

Benefits related to school attendance are not the same for boys and for girls whose role is more restricted to the family and its reputation within the community. Therefore the most quoted benefits for girls are *"better knowledge, and better situation within the families"* (social image and reputation). *"Serving the country"* (which relates very much with the daughters' interviews) is also very much quoted.

Half of the fathers are mentioning their daughter's futures job, while thinking of their daughter's future... while other interviewees mention *"marriage and children"*. *"Good religious practices and values"* are also quoted by one fifth of the fathers. At the same time, religious practices are seen by the father as indispensable components of the future of the daughters.

The fact that girls' schools are far from their homes comes as a significant barrier to school attendance and almost one third of the fathers are complaining about it.

The lack of money is perceived as another barrier: despite education being free but books and stationary are expensive.

Half of the interviewees who do not send their daughters to school, mention tradition and religion to justify their behavior. The problem for them is actually that their daughters can meet *"strangers"* or can be *"seen"* if they go to school which is an evil thing according to their beliefs. The same way, *"having daughters bothered by boys or getting negative comments from the neighborhood"* are quoted as negative things for girls' attendance to schools, ex. quote from 28 yo father *"girls should not go alone (outside)"*. For these interviewees the main issue is not *"educating daughters or not"* but keeping them inside the family circle and under the control of family and religion.

Significant differences are observed between rural and urban areas.

In the South, where many mullahs have studied in Pakistan and are less in favor of girls' education, quotes are made that the opposition to girls' education is driven by the neighboring countries influence: It comes *"from the enemy of Afghanistan"* quotes a 46 yo.

Interpretation of religion and tradition are not the only barriers to girls' attendance as some fathers make even stronger statements like 39 yo father from Kabul, *"Girls' education is harmful because they have weak minds and can't think"*.

On the contrary, religion is sometimes quoted by fathers to justify their sending girls' to school as it is a duty in Islam.

*"Having good moral values and following the tradition"* come very close to *"getting good marks at school"* when it comes to impress the father, which again stresses the importance of religion in the Afghan society.

Both fathers and mothers are perceived as key people to get in touch with, if one wants to convince a family to send children and girls to school, but in the interviews very few, not to say none, of the fathers mentioned their wives taking any decision regarding children attendance to school.

The tasks of the daughter at home are housekeeping tasks for all of the fathers. None is mentioning this as a possible constraint for girls attending school.

***Media***

Fathers get informed mostly through mass media, and radio is preferred by most of them because they can afford it and listen to it, ex father from Bamyan *"the best media for accurate information and I can access it regularly"* whereas TV is less accessible.

It is worth to notice negative opinions against media by some fathers who do not send their girls to school (ex: news on the radio).

## DETAILED RESULTS - TEACHERS

Teachers feel very happy about their job even if they complain about not getting paid enough. Some of them were very enthusiastic during the interviews like this 57 yo Kabul teacher *"I am happy to serve my compatriots; the reconstruction is going well all around the country".*

The job of teacher is often described as a holy job: "it was the profession of the prophet Muhammad", "a teacher is a messenger of God", etc...

On the negative side, some teachers are criticizing their collegues because of their lack of skills and experience.

***Situation at school***

Teachers' concerns are mostly focused on material difficulties: "We don't have enough chairs, books, etc...".

For most of them, female students feel *"at ease at school"* and are *"very motivated"* which helps them become independent and socialize with other people apart from their families.

There are great changes for girls attending school, changes in their social attitude and improvement of positive community values.

Female teachers insist particularly on girls' dedication to school: *"Girls are more interested in their lessons and participate more in the scientific and cultural activities of the school. Girls become sad if one day their teacher cannot attend school, they have a stronger ability to consider things than boys, ..."*
Such comments appear as well but less frequently in the male teachers' interviews.

Teachers are quite satisfied with the new governmental curriculum that has to be improved according to them. They have mixed but rather positive opinions on the student center curriculum.
In general teachers find subjects taught at school satisfactory.

Most of them think that additional education is a good complement to formal school. Some also, a smaller group, have a good opinion on the religious education system.

According to teachers, relations between the school and the community are good. They say their social role is to liaise with families regarding education issues rather than other subjects.

***Barriers to girls' attendance***

The lack of proper school facilities for girls is a big concern for the teachers, "girls' schools are in poor condition", "inexistant in my village". Girls' schools are far especially in rural areas.

According to teachers, the main problems faced by girls at school are: *''economic problems''* ex 40 yo Herat teacher *"family cannot even afford to prepare stationeries for their children", "lack of material"* and *''family/community opposition to school attendance"*, ex 35 yo Kabul teacher quoting *''some families don't let their daughters go to school because they think it is a dishonor".*

The "protective / possessive" father is often seen as an obstacle:
- *''we should talk to the fathers, they should understand that the war is over and that they can send their daughters to school, there is no more security problems".*
- *"fathers do not want to let their daughters to go to school because they want them to get married according to their wish (...) if they go to school, they might become shameless and disobey".*

Security issues come out less frequently, excepted in Khost*: "sometimes gunmen enter the school, which disturbs the students and causes bad psychological effects".*
On the other hand, in a sensitive area like Khost with few girls' schools, teachers are not complaining more than in other areas about parents' opposition to girls' attendance to school. A teacher from Khost even quotes: "now people are ready to send their girls to school".

There is no major difference between male and female teachers in the interviews. They all mention the same issues about school in general and girls' attendance in particular. Female teachers are not uncomfortable at school, they say. The only difference that can be noticed is that female teachers are stronger in their criticisms when it comes to fathers not allowing their daughters' to go to school. Male teachers criticize also parents who do not let their daughters to attend school.

***Opportunities***

Teachers would focus on 3 main objectives to increase girls' education: 1- contact with families (*"we have a lot of contacts with the parents and meet in order to solve the problems"*), 2- communication to sensitize around the subject and 3- development of school facilities.

Teachers trust local authorities, political power, families and NGOs to solve these problems, some quoting also religious people, ex 35 yo Kabul teacher *"Legal Islamic measures should be taken because the rights of women are more present in Islam than in any other religion in the world".*

Practical trainings in the areas of sewing, carpentry, tailoring etc... are viewed as opportunities at school to make it accessible.

In the interviews, main differences between city and rural areas are in the number/accessibility of schools for girls and not in the social barriers.

### *Media*

Teachers are convinced that media can play a significant role.

They are very focused on TV and Radio and also quote print press as an efficient media (Nb: the fact that they are teachers makes them the target audience that reads the most).

Teachers recommend radio dramas to promote girls' education and educational programmes on TV.

Mention of the children magazine Parwaz as well as other minor publications targeting young people.

# DETAILED RESULTS - OPINION LEADERS

### *Education*

Education within the communities is perceived as contrasted but in progress:
Ex mullah from Kabul *"today girls and boys are talking about pens and paper and not anymore about guns and war"* but there are still strong concerns especially about the quality of the school system and the number of schools, pharmacist from Hazaradjat *"in Shaheedan there is only one school for 5000 families".*

Many opinion leaders quote: *"the level of education is very low"*, many of them adding statistics of high illiteracy rate or poor school attendance.

It is noticeable that opinion leaders from Kabul view the situation of education much more positively than those of other areas, especially in the South. Opinion leaders quote that a lot of schools are missing there. Khost is described by all opinion leaders as being particularly deprived of schools but no opposition from the local government is mentioned.

Main obstacles to education in general are the *"bad financial situation of many households"*, the fact that children of illiterate parents have to work in the field/farm, the *"poor quality of the education system"*, and less frequently quoted *"teachers not being trained enough"*, *"not being professional enough"* and also *"not being paid enough".*

Interviewees think that the situation can be improved with the help of political power and other institutions like NGOs and Mullahs.

Awareness of the role of NGOs and UNICEF is high. This role is perceived positively excepted when the presence of NGOs and International organization encourages the best teachers to change job and work for these organizations. Ex an opinion leader from Herat *"the fact that NGOs and International Organizations are giving high salaries encourage the best teachers to leave their jobs".*

Most of the opinion leaders are satisfied with the subjects taught at school and think that religious education is a good complement to general school. *"If someone can start reading the Koran then he can read the other subjects."*

Some interviewed mullahs agree that they can be a good cooperation between the two systems and that religious education system is not enough, 60 yo mullah from Kabul said *"religious education system is not enough, children need an education covering more subjects".*

### *Girls' education*

Opinion leaders say that the overall community favors girls' education and every kind of education (family/religion/value/professional oriented) is quoted as being useful for girls. Behavior of parents against girls' school attendance is criticized sometimes in a very strong way: Lecturer at the law faculty of Herat *"I have even seen two girls committing suicide because their father did not want them to go to school".*

Many opinion leaders mention strong differences between cities and rural areas perceived as places where girls' education is not a priority for the families. Some of them even named groups of people living in rural areas who are supposedly against girls education: *"there is one area called Morechaq near Turkemnistan, 8000 families are living there who are against girls' education' ... "*.
Herat is the only city where someone quotes the other way round that *"women living outside the city have more freedom"*.

All the interviewees think that it is of the highest importance to improve girls' education and girls' attendance to school, but sometimes not in the same way. For example an imam from Dehyahya may well agree about girls' education but on the other hand will stress the point that no girl should work with men: *"women should not work with men"*. Interviewed religious opinion leaders are open to girls' getting educated but this does not mean that they do not want to restrict them to their traditional role in the Afghan society.

It is interesting to notice that many opinion leaders insist on the better role that educated women can have within their own families: *"An educated mother can better control the environment of the family", "education help women to educate their children better"*. There is no contradiction between being educated and assuming the traditional role of the woman in the Afghan family.

Benefits most frequently quoted for girls are: *"to serve the country, the people"*, *"to become self accomplished"*, a journalist from Bamyan says *"girls can become literate if they go to school, and then participate to the reconstruction of the country"*.

Almost all opinion leaders think that both fathers and mothers should be committed to girls' education.

Regarding the role opinion leaders can play in promoting girls' education within the community, they would focus mostly on *"advice to parents"*, *"conflict resolution"*, and less frequently quoted *"direct advice to children"*.

Opinion leaders claim having good relationship with fathers but very few deal with the mothers (see gender issues in the Afghan society).

The subjects they raise with fathers and mothers within the community range from children education to religious questions.

Dialog and intervention among families are ways to influence them in their choices.

Mollahs are often identified as key opinion leaders to promote school attendance for girls'.

***Media***

The pattern is similar to that of the other audiences: Radio and TV are quoted with an emphasis to direct communication to the general public through committees, etc...

Main media mentioned are BBC and Radio Azadi and Kilid magazine.

The most liked format in radio being the drama (ex: "New home new life").

Like for the other audiences, as a commander from Herat quotes: *"Media have not yet found a special place in the community".*

## BACKGROUND

Girls' Education is one of UNICEF's top three priorities for 2004 in Afghanistan, along with Salt Iodization and Safe Motherhood.

To ensure the success of this project UNICEF has appointed Thompson Social and Rural (India) to elaborate and implement a communication strategy.

For this purpose Thompson Social & Rural needs reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive data on the subject and has appointed Altai Consulting to conduct a one-month nationwide formative research study on girls' education in November 2003.

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to get an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind low priority/lack of education for girls in Afghanistan and identify main drivers of change and barriers/opportunities with a view to elaborate and implement a communication strategy for 2004.

This survey is a "snapshot" of the situation of girls' education in Afghanistan in November 2003, just two years after the fall of Taliban.

It covers all key audiences, in cities as well as in remote rural areas where most of the Afghans live.

The study focuses on the major issues linked with girls' education, perception of education in general, girls and women in the Afghan society, role of girls and women in the Afghan family, main barriers to girls' education, influencers in the Afghan society and opportunities for changes.

## DETAILED RESULTS - GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Interviewees feel positive and proud about their job with a lot of quotes regarding reconstruction.

In general government officials claim they are doing their job with a view to help the community or the nation.

A feel of optimism can be observed in the interviews especially when it comes to the subject of education and girls' education, and this, in spite of an unsatisfactory situation (see below).

### *Girls' education and its barriers*

Government officials complain about the quality of education in general, especially the material situation of schools and the lack of schools, *"30 000 girls cannot go to school in Kandahar area, because of school being far from the villages and the lack of transportations",* says a military man from Kandahar.
For a majority of interviewees girls' education facilities are poor and do not even exist in some areas (villages).

Most quoted factors against girls' education are the *"poor quality of the education system"* in general, the *"social pressure"* and *"financial problems in many families"*.

When they describe the barriers to girls' education, government officials are the target audience the most focused on material constraints.

According to them, additional reasons for poor girls' education are the lack of female teachers and skilled females in general (often quoted especially in the South / Khost area) and sometimes the lack of funding to promote women's associations initiatives in the field of education.

Girls' education is nevertheless perceived as a priority for both local and central governments, there is not the least complain about any political body playing a negative role against girls' education.

### *Actions to promote girls' education*

Interviewees massively think that the community in general favors girls' education and that girls' education has the full support of their institution, *"in the governmental frame, priority has been given to girls' education"*, says a military from Kandahar. They mention plans within their institutions to promote girls' education and say they have very good contacts with teachers and with people working at school.

Girls' education could be improved by developing school facilities and sensitizing families and communities.

UNICEF is quoted many times as well as other organizations (USAID, Islamic Relief, etc...) as playing a positive role.

Few negative quotes against NGOs, "NGOs are just filling their pockets..."

Efficient actions to promote girls' education are often described as the result of combined actions from the community, the government or the local political power, international organizations or NGOs and religious people.

Government officials insist on the dialog with communities and families to make their initiatives a success. Actions taken by their institutions have been successful and the increased number of girls attending school is a sign of this success according to them (see feeling of optimism in the interviews).

The limit to their action is the lack of funding, *"We went to villages and promised that we would open literacy courses, but due to the lack of funds, we could not implement our plan"*, government official, Herat.

Government officials rely on foreign aid because of the lack of fund available to build and run schools.

For government officials, the most important thing to do in terms of communication should be to reassure families that there are no negative effects to sending girls' to school, *"we have to reassure families that there is no problem with the education of girls".*

Their institutions could be useful by promoting a dialog with the families in order to increase girls' education. They suggest getting in touch with communities through meetings and committees.

Depending on their position within the government/local power, most of them are already mentioning meetings with the community as well as some work conducted with NGOs or UNICEF.
They feel that they have to be part of the process of promoting girls' education.

There are no significant differences between the areas (rural / urban; North / South) in the interviews when it comes to actions taken by government officials or ways to promote girls' education.

### *Media*

Almost all interviewees think that media can play a significant role.

Some of them are mentioning campaigns (billboards, leaflets...) on girls' education in the past.

Radio and TV is their favorite media when it comes to education, ex-official from Kabul *"Radio is playing a great role in the improvement of education, through radio and TV people get to know about what is going on".*

Local radio stations are more quoted by government officials than by any other audience. One of the reasons is that most of these radio stations are in the hands of political powers linked with local governments.

Kilid is the only magazine quoted several times.

The answer to the question about the best time to target a large audience on girls' education is *"when people do not work"*: either night time (after 6 pm) or on Fridays, especially in the afternoon.

## NOTE ON MEDIA

In spite of all efforts to make interviewees talk about the subject, information on media remains general.

Media in Afghanistan is something very new as there were only one newspaper and one state radio station during the Taliban. Apart from Kabul, there are still only one or two local radio stations in the main cities, broadcasting only a few hours a day for some of them. That is why interviewees were more keen to quote their favorite media, rather than in depth analyzing the differences between the different media they have access to. This is all the more true that questions on media were addressed at the end of the interviews.

As far as alternative media is concerned, educational mobile cinema was a tremendous success last year, reaching approximately 500 000 people. At the end of the day, this figure only accounts for 2% of the Afghan population, that is why very few interviewees mentioned this media, which does not mean that it shall not be part of a communication campaign on girls' education.

We can still conclude the following from the interviews:

- TV is not a mass media in Afghanistan when it comes to target an audience spread all around the country.

- A high illiteracy rate combined with very few interviewees from villages quoting magazines or newspapers do not make press a mass media either.

- Outdoor advertising is an option.

- Radio it the mass media N1 in Afghanistan, BBC, Azadi and local radio stations play an important role in the provinces, Arman and Killid dominate Kabul. Radio also bears the advantage of reaching secluded women.
  Dramas are described as the most efficient way to raise the issue of girls' education as it seems to be popular within most target groups.

# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research being to find the most appropriate approach to generate incentive to change behavior with regards to girls' education, it has been decided to conduct a qualitative study. This means that a lot of open questions are asked which is critical to let the audience express any kind of opinions/concerns/ideas.

### *Timing*

The project started 1st November with all the field work been conducted between 14th November and 1st December.

### *Interviews*

Given the sensitivity of the subject, face to face interviews have been prefered rather than focus groups so that interviewees can express themselves freely and feel comfortable while answering questions. Conducting in-depth interviews is the most appropriate way to get in-depth qualitative information. All the more so in the area of girls' education in Afghanistan, only two years after the fall of Taliban and in a context where girls' schools are still regularly under attack in some parts of the country.

Interviews have been conducted in Dari and Pashto in different places. Some of them were 'home interviews', which was critical in order to include women who rarely leave their home in the most conservative areas.

Interview guides/questionnaires have been adapted to each target group to get information from the interviewees in the most appropriate manner and to focus on the main topics.

Using interview guides/questionnaires is the best way to structure the interviews, given that the audience is not used to concentrate a long time and answer numerous questions. It allows us to gather data despite the fact that not all questions are answered during an interview. Proceeding differently would have prevented us from interviewing illiterate and low educated people who constitute a large share of the audience.

Interview guides have been delivered to the interviewers in Dari and Pashto.

Minutes of the interviews has been taken mostly by written to make the interviewees feel comfortable. All these minutes in Dari or Pashto are translated in English (see annex).

### *Covered areas*

In-depth interviews covered the following areas:

- Perception of education in general:
  Including boys vs girls, religious education vs attendance to state schools.

- Girls and women in the Afghan society:
  Identification of the main barriers, of drivers that would facilitate girls' education, including women's rights, evolution over the last two years

- Role of girls and women in the Afghan family.

- Main barriers to girls' education:
  Including all factors: financial, social pressure, religion...

- Influencers in the Afghan society:
  With a focus on community, religion, media etc...
  Study of the audiences influence power within/outside the family
  Attitudes, behaviours and practices

- Opportunities for changes:
  Media habits and communication channels: how to reach the audience?
  Which medium has the ability to persuade? In what surroundings are the audiences exposed to media both conventional and non-conventional?

***Audiences and locations***

In-depth interviews have been conducted among 7 kinds of audiences

- Mothers of young girls
- Fathers of young girls
- Young girls
- Young boys
- Teachers
- Opinion leaders (mainly Mullahs and elderlies, "white beards")
- Government officials

Regarding geographic areas, to ensure that the samples chosen for research are representative, several criteria have been taken into account:

- ethnicity: behaviors with regards to gender issues, to education,... as well as language differ significantly from one ethnic group to the other
- geography: the geographic pattern of an area drives school attendance rates, as well as access to media
- school attendance
- media exposure

Based on these variables, and other secondary variables (security, wealth, etc.) we have selected the following areas to conduct formative research:

- Kabul: mixed population, urban + special focus on rural areas around Kabul.
- Herat: mixed ethnicity, strong political power
- Kandahar: Pashto – desert area – unsecure area

- Bamyan: mainly Hazara – mountaineous area
- Khost: Pashto, sensitive area, lack of schools for girls

(nb: Paktika and Zabul have been rejected for reasons of insecurity).

300 in-depth interviews have been spread among 6 geographical areas:

| Total | Government officials | Opinion leaders | Teachers | Fathers | Mothers | Boys | Girls | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50 | 4 | 5 | 13 | 13 | 8 | 3 | 5 | Kabul city |
| 47 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 6 | 4 | 7 | Kabul rural |
| 48 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 7 | 4 | Herat |
| 55 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 15 | 7 | 5 | 6 | Bamyan |
| 50 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 6 | Khost |
| 50 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 5 | 5 | 6 | Kandahar |
| **300** | **27** | **38** | **57** | **78** | **37** | **29** | **34** | **Total** |

***Procedure to select respondents***

Interviewers started their work in pre-determined geographical areas (cities or villages) with a list describing the kind of respondents they had to interview.

Depending on the audience, interviewers were told to mix in home / outdoor / office interviews as much as possible and to avoid any places where the interviewees would not feel comfortable.

Interviewers had to get in touch with supposedly "representative" persons of their target group.

They were not allowed to interview any relatives, family members etc…

***Interpretation***

To facilitate interpretation, encoding methods helped structure the interviews and classify information by themes. As previously mentioned (see comments on audience not getting used to answer questions), not all the questions got answered and got encoded.

*Remark: by no way these encoding documents in annex can be used to draw any quantitative conclusion (see size of samples, etc…).*

***Team of researchers***

***Resources***

The project was led jointly by Rodolphe Baudeau, Wali Hashimi, and Anne-Valerie Triboulot

**Rodolphe Baudeau** is one of the founders of Aina, Afghanistan's largest media NGO. He was more specifically in charge of Radio, Finance and Sustainability projects. Aina now employs more than 170 Afghan people and 27 foreigners. Prior to this, Rodolphe was Marketing Manager for "fragrances" of L'Oreal consumer goods division. He has managed 8 brands including Vanderbilt, Laura Ashley, Harley-Davidson accounting for more than USD 130 million in revenues. In addition he has been a lecturer in Communication and Marketing in one of France's most prestigious academic institution, Sciences-Po.
Rodolphe has spent more than 16 months in Afghanistan and traveled in 18 provinces in the country.

**Wali Hashimi** has studied RTV journalism in the Netherlands and has worked as a producer for two Dutch TV stations, RTL News and NOVA. After September 11th and the fall of Taliban in Afghanistan, Wali came back to his country and started working with the American NGO Internews on media law and on trainings and seminars. Since November 2002, Wali worked with USAID/OTI as a Media Program Manager. This job included monitoring of media projects and project development all over Afghanistan as well as extensive field research, qualitative and quantitative studies.

**Anne-Valerie Triboulot**. A 1999 graduate from HEC, France's top business school, Anne-Valerie has been working until July 2003 as an internal consultant for Europe's fourth largest insurer (Allianz). During this period she conducted several marketing and restructuring projects.

The rest of the team was composed of:

A national coordinator in charge of all the work in Kabul area and in the regions:

**Abdullah Kakkar** is a graduated from Faculty of law and Political science. He has worked as a master trainer, writer and actor in the field of Peace Education, Peace Building and Participatory Methodology of teaching for Sanayee Development Foundation (USAID funded SDF NGO), a programme that was selected by UNHCR to compete for Nobel Prize. Abdullah now works for Altai Consulting as project Manager.

A regional coordinator regional

**Jacques de Champchesnel**, has worked in different development and humanitarian programs in Asia and South America both in urban and rural contexts. He has launched the Regional Development Program in AINA, setting-up 7 Regional Media Centers around Afghanistan. He is the current manager of this program.

Assistant coordinators

**Zaher Sultani.** Formerly journalist at Malalai, the main women publication in Afghanistan, Zaher is currently fully in charge of research and data gathering within the AINA regional branches.

**Abdul Bari Siddiqi** has a degree in Social and Political Sciences. He joined AINA after a strong experience in the field of international trade and telecommunication. He has launched the AINA activities in the Eastern provinces of Afghanistan as well as the Jallalabad office. Adding to his Regional Coordinating Responsibilities, he is in charge of developing sustainable activities for the AINA Regional development network.

**Hafizullah Ghastalai.** Formerly chief editor of Gurbat a major Afghan Pashtoo magazine, Hafizullah has conducted extensive work in the field of investigation and media assessment. Since 2002, he has launched the AINA regional activities in the 6 Southern provinces of Afghanistan. Formerly in charge of Kandahar office, Hafizullah is now field coordinator of the whole Regional development team.

**A team of 10 Afghan interviewers** leaving permanently in the areas of investigation. Most of them are regional managers from the AINA regional network, excepted for women interviewers. Those people are used and trained to do extensive field work and will have to attend Altai Consulting briefing sessions.

**An Afghan translator** (English, Dari and Pashto)

The whole team will be based in Afghanistan during the whole project (excluding R&R and holidays).

*Organization*

Altai Supervision team
R Baudeau - W Hashemi - AV Triboulot

Altai Project Management
A Kakkar

Workfield Kabul
AV Triboulot
10 Interviewers
Translators

Workfield Provinces in partnership with AINA
J Faisant
4 field coordinators
Interviewers
Translators

To ensure homogeneity of the process a coordinator from Altai Consulting traveled to all the locations and ensured quality checking.

***Process and quality checking***

The following process has been followed in order to conduct appropriate methodology for the project and test all the material.

- Design of 7 interview guides (one interview guide per target audience).
- Pilot interviews in Kabul areas (Kabul city and rural Kabul).
- Translation of all questionnaires in Dari and Pashto, including quality control of the translations.
- Two-day training of Aina regional coordinators and interviewers in Kabul.
- Field work: interviews in Bamyan/Khost/Kabul/Kandahar /Herat.
- Quality control of field work in Khost, Herat, Bamyan and Kandahar.
- Quality control of the interviews.
- Typing and translation of all the interviews.
- Translation of interviews.
- Design of encoding database.
- Analysis.

Note on the content of the training of Aina coordinators:

- Objective of the research, methodology and deliverables
- Criticality of the data collection
- Questionnaire
- Active listening and psychological approach of the interviewees
- Role play interviews to all the audiences have been conducted by each participant.

## DEBRIEF FIELD STUDY

Interviewers have been able to conduct all the interviews in all areas properly in spite of November having been one of the worst months in terms of security over the last two years.

During this project we had to report a security incident as two Altai interviewers have been stopped at a Taliban checkpoint near Khost where fighters stopped the road for a few hours.

Apart from these major security problems, main difficulties met have been:

- working during Ramadan and Eid
- logistics, for obvious reasons linked with the season especially in mountainous areas.
- interviewing girls, women and illiterate people
- people expecting to be paid during the interviews
- concentration of the audience during interviews
- repeated questions that disturbed audience

- level of understanding
- translations Dari / Pashto / English
- accreditation letters required by teachers for interviews